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UNCLAS HARARE 000501

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SUBJECT: CHINESE ASSISTANCE TO ZIMBABWE

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[11](#). (U) On March 22, Poloff met with Shaohua Duan, Third Secretary (Economic and Commercial) of the Embassy of the

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People's Republic of China to discuss Chinese humanitarian assistance to Zimbabwe. Duan, who arrived in July 2002, told Poloff that Chinese assistance was limited by China's own developing nation status and not the political and economic crises afflicting Zimbabwe. In 2002, China donated 4500 MT of maize and pledged US\$500,000 cash for food purchases to Zimbabwe after the UN appeal. Duan also indicated that China provided interest free loans for Chinese-Zimbabwe joint venture projects. He mentioned Zimbabwe Iron and Steel Company as one which has received a commercial credit of US\$35 million. Duan also indicated that China provides assistance on a smaller scale (e.g., a few computers or Z\$100,000) in response to individual Government ministry or company requests for money and assistance. China also provides technical courses on topics such as agricultural techniques, computer software, and aquaculture for which the Chinese government provides room and board in China for selected participants. Overall China-Zimbabwe trade was US\$190 million in 2003.

[12](#). (SBU) China's modest engagement here is magnified by the GOZ, which publicly counts China as one of its most important friends in the global community. China's special position here has historical roots in China's support of ZANU-PF's Mozambique-based insurgency before independence (the USSR supported rival ZANU's Zambia-based insurgency). In trumpeting the purported success of the GOZ's "Look East" foreign policy, the official media frequently showcases evidence of Chinese-Zimbabwean fraternity. Chinese are uniformly portrayed as caring for the welfare of Zimbabweans and in solidarity with Zimbabwe against neo-colonial imperialist aggressors. A recent Chinese-hosted social event attracting an array of cabinet members and prominent ruling party officials testified to the importance attached by the GOZ to the bilateral relationship.

[13](#). (SBU) At the root of Zimbabwe's humanitarian and economic crises is a political crisis. Presumably China will only be able to realize any advantage from its inside track with Zimbabwe if Zimbabwe's economic implosion is arrested and international confidence is restored -- circumstances that hinge on resolution of the country's political crisis. Accordingly, to the extent that Zimbabwe is addressed at the U.S. China Humanitarian Assistance Dialogue next month, it may be useful to urge China to use its influence quietly to nudge the GOZ toward inter-party dialogue with the opposition -- a first step toward national reconstruction that would be in U.S. and Chinese interests.

SULLIVAN